

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11626

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GT, VT
SUBJECT: THE VATICAN AND THE MASSACRE OF "CAMPEÑINOS" IN GUATEMALA

1. IN A DEPARTURE FROM NORMAL PRACTICE, THE VATICAN'S ORGAN OSSERVATORE

ROMANO ON JUNE 22 HIGHLIGHTS THE RECENT CONDEMNATION BY GUATEMALAN
BISHOPS OF THE MAY 30 "MASSACRE OF "CAMPEÑINOS" BY LANDOWNERS AND
MEMBERS OF THE ARMY IN THE VILLAGE OF PANZOS.

2. ARTICLE WHICH IS DATED IN GUATEMALA CITY MAKES FOLLOWING POINTS:
--THE BISHOPS OF GUATEMALA, 40 PRIESTS AND 48 RELIGIOUS OF THE DIOCESE

VERA PAZ, AND THE GUATEMALAN COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE HAVE
CONDEMNED THE KILLING OF SOME 100 INDIANS, AMONG THEM 20 WOMEN AND
CHILDREN.

--THE GUATEMALAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, IN ADDITION TO CONDEMNING
THE ACTION, REQUESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT "AN EXTENSIVE
INVESTIGATION ON THE EVENTS OF PANZOS AND THEIR CAUSES," AND CALLED
ON "ALL GOOD PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL TO UNDERTAKE AN EFFICACIOUS COMMITMENT

TOWARD GREATER JUSTICE" IN GUATEMALA.
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--THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF GUATEMALA HAS ISSUED ORDERS TO
"CARITAS" AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE AN EMERGENCY
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE INHABITANTS OF PANZOS.

3. COMMENT: THE HIGHLIGHTING OF THIS EVENT IS IN LINE WITH
CURRENT VATICAN CONCERN WITH HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN LATIN

AMERICA, A SUBJECT WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE ONE OF THE CENTRAL THEMES OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS, SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 12-28, IN PUEBLA, MEXICO.

THE HIGHLIGHTING OF THE MATTER ALSO REFLECTS THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE VATICAN VIEWS THE STATUS OF CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS IN GUATEMALA. THE VATICAN IS WELL AWARE THAT THE CHURCH IN GUATEMALA IS RELATIVELY WEAK BECAUSE OF THE HIGH NUMBER OF PRIESTS THAT ARE FOREIGNERS (SOME 400 OUT OF 650) AND ALSO THE FACT THAT THERE IS A SPLIT BETWEEN THE HIGHER CLERGY, WHICH IS COMMITTED TO A CAUTIOUS POLICY OF MAINTAINING A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE STATE, AND THE LOWER CLERGY WHICH IS DEMANDING A MORE AGGRESSIVE POLICY ON BEHALF OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND OF ASSISTANCE TO THE POOR. WE UNDERSTAND HOWEVER THAT BOTH THE EPISCOPATE AND THE STATE DESIRE THE CONTINUANCE OF THE MODUS VIVENDI AND THERE IS NO INTEREST ON EITHER PAR TO SEE CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS DETERIORATE. THE DELAY IN THE PUBLICATION OF THE EVENT SIGNIFIES A SIMILAR VATICAN PREDISPOSITION. APPARENTLY, THERE IS SOME PREDISPOSITION ON THE PART OF THE STATE TO ACCEPT A MORE FORTHRIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP B THE CHURCH OF THE SOCIAL DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE ON THE PRINCIPLE "BETTER THE CHURCH THAN THE COMMUNISTS."

THE BISHOPS, WHILE OBVIOUSLY RESPONDING TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT, MAY HAVE DRAWN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THEIR STRONG CONDEMNATION OF THIS PARTICULAR EVENT FROM POPE PAUL'S STANCE
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ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN HIS 1978 ADDRESS TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED

TO THE VATICAN. IN THAT ADDRESS, POPE PAUL MADE HUMAN RIGHTS THE CENTERPIECE OF HIS DISCOURSE AND PLACED THE VATICAN AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH SQUARELY BEHIND EFFORTS TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, RACIAL EQUALITY AND THE RIGHT TO PHYSICAL AND PSYCHICAL SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. GARDNER

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